*Northwest Bible Church – Aug. 2, 2004 – Worship Service – Alan Conner*

**Romans 9:19-23**

*The Potter and His Clay*

**INTRO**    In our passage this morning there are two things we need to work through. First is the second objection raised against the doctrine of unconditional election and, second, based on his answer we will delve into the teaching of reprobation.
Reprobation is that eternal decree of God whereby He has determined to pass some men by with the operations of His special grace, and to punish them for their sins, to the manifestation of His justice. (Louis Berkhof)

**I. THE OBJECTION STATED (v. 19).**
    Objection #2 - If v. 18 is true and God shows mercy and hardens whom He desires, apart from our willing or religious doing, then why does God find fault in those whom He hardens? For who can resist His will? (v. 19). There are several elements to this objection:

            1) There is the assumption that the hardening results in "fault" or sin.
            2) That the "finding fault" refers to the final judgment.
            3) God’s will here is irresistible.
            4) The conclusion that this is not right for God to hold hardened sinners accountable.

**II. THE ANSWER TO THE OBJECTION (vv. 20-23).**
    A. The Potter-clay analogy (vv. 20-21).

        1) Rebuke (v. 20). The absence of rights for the clay/creature. This is a rhetorical question.

            "On the contrary" -
            "Who are you, O man" –
            "Who answers back to God?" -
            "The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?"                 Paul quotes from both Isa. 29:16 and 45:9.

                 The clay has no right to accuse the Potter of making a mistake or challenging his will in what he does with the clay. And human beings are in the same position before God as the clay before the potter. We have no right to accuse the Potter for how He makes us. WHY? Because God is the Creator and we are the creatures.

        2) Rebuke (v. 21). The sovereign right of the potter/creator. Rhetorical question which expects a positive answer. The potter as the creator has the total right to make the clay into whatever kind of vessel He chooses (v. 21).

             Honorable use –
            Dishonorable use –

But here SALVATION and DAMNATION are in view as we will see in vv. 22-23 (vessels of wrath/mercy; destruction/glory; v. 18 mercy and hardening). The same word "vessel" occurs in v. 21 and vv. 22-23.

            from the same lump - all the same, refers to the human race.

        Point: THE POTTER HAS THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO MAKE VESSELS FOR HONOR (salvation) AND VESSELS FOR DISHONOR (destruction).

    B. Analogy applied (vv. 22-23).

            God, as the Divine Potter, makes vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy to display His holy attributes. This gives the answer to the question WHY God makes some vessels for honor (salvation) and some for dishonor (judgment).

        1) God is willing to manifest His wrath and power on vessels of wrath.

        2) Because God is willing to show His wrath, He chooses to patiently endure the vessels of wrath so that His righteous wrath and power of judgment will be all the more glorious and awesome when manifested.

                What about "prepared for destruction"? The teaching here is DOUBLE PREDESTINATION.

        3) God’s patient endurance of vessels of wrath also has the purpose of manifesting the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy prepared beforehand for glory. This is God’s ultimate purpose.

                "prepared beforehand" = predestination in eternity past as in Rom.   8:29. See only other use Eph. 2:10.
                "for glory" = splendors of heaven.
                "vessels of mercy" = the elect of God unto salvation

        \*\* Thus, God’s patience now with vessels of wrath will not only lead to a more glorious display of His wrath and power upon them later in the day of judgment, but also will give a more glorious display of the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy.

**CONCLUSION**